



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Ysgol Maes Owen

**Morfa Avenue
Kinmel Bay
Rhyl
LL18 5LE**

Date of inspection: June 2023

by

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

About Ysgol Maes Owen

Name of provider	Ysgol Maes Owen
Local authority	Conwy County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Not applicable
Number of pupils on roll	252
Pupils of statutory school age	252
Number in nursery classes	Not applicable
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 23.0%)	34.4%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 16.1%)	32.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	3.2%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2013
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/12/2014
Start date of inspection	12/06/2023
There is a learning resource base at the school, which is funded by the local authority.	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Ysgol Maes Owen is a community school, catering for children aged seven to eleven years. The school is organised into four mixed classes in the lower school of Year 3 and Year 4 pupils, and five mixed classes in the upper school of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. In addition, there is a twelve place Learning Resource Base (LRB) provided by the local authority, catering for learners with moderate learning difficulties.

The school is both caring and inclusive and the staff promote a very positive atmosphere, which helps in improving pupils' outcomes. Pupils enjoy learning and they are enthusiastic during lessons and in activities. This is due to the very strong working relationships that exist with their teachers and other staff. The LRB, and its pupils, play an important part in the school's daily life.

On the whole, teaching and assessment are good. However, there are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of pupils and the quality of their feedback. Learning is particularly successful where the teaching and responses to pupils' work are purposeful and challenge pupils to perform at their best. This helps most pupils to make effective progress in developing their listening, speaking, reading and digital skills. Additionally, many pupils' extended writing skills and their ability to improve their own writing independently are developing appropriately.

All staff promote a very positive ethos of support and care for pupils. This encourages pupils to consider their own well-being and behaviour responsibly. This contributes to their positive attitudes to learning and their resilience to persevere with tasks. The school helps pupils to build confidence in themselves as individuals, while also developing a strong respect for the feelings of others. Overall, the school environment promotes beneficial learning opportunities, which includes a stimulating woodland area.

Leaders evaluate the school's work to plan for improvements thoroughly. The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership. She has a determination to succeed for the benefit of pupils, staff and the community. The senior leadership team, the staff and the governors share her engaging and purposeful vision. They work together progressively to ensure that the school is inclusive and that it promotes beneficial learning opportunities. However, the provision for developing pupils' Welsh speaking skills and their use of numeracy across the curriculum are not as well established.

The headteacher's determination to improve the quality of provision and pupils' outcomes is a significant strength of the school. She shares responsibilities intelligently among staff and provides relevant and effective opportunities for professional learning. This contributes to positive and challenging whole-school initiatives, where staff and pupils feel valued for their contributions to school life.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that teachers' expectations of pupils' outcomes and their responses to pupils' work are consistent across the school
- R2 Improve the opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their numeracy skills
- R3 Strengthen the provision for pupils to speak Welsh

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils enter the school, at the age of seven, with skills that are below the expected level for their age. Many pupils achieve well across all areas of the curriculum, with most of them making effective progress in their listening, speaking, reading and digital skills.

Most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) achieve well and pupils in the LRB make strong gains in their learning. Across the school, pupils needing support access all aspects of the curriculum successfully and they make purposeful progress from their starting points.

Most pupils' listening and speaking skills develop quickly. As they move from Year 3 to Year 6, they gain confidence and answer questions sensibly while discussing tasks with their peers. For example, Year 3 pupils express their feelings carefully when discussing how to use their 'learning powers' to improve their well-being. As they move through the school, most pupils make good progress and develop a wider vocabulary. They listen well to each other and engage in eloquent discussions, such as reflecting on the atrocities of the Holocaust. Many pupils in the LRB develop beneficial listening and speaking skills, to access a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities.

Most pupils make effective progress in developing their reading skills. Many of the youngest pupils learn to blend sounds efficiently and, by Year 4, most pupils' progress in reading is good. They attempt unfamiliar words using a variety of phonic strategies purposefully. By Year 6, most pupils are competent readers, and they are well equipped to use a variety of different texts confidently. For example, they describe characters from the Mabinogion and the adventures and dangers they encounter in the mythical tales.

Many pupils make effective progress in their writing considering their starting points. By Year 4, the majority of pupils are beginning to write more extended pieces independently, such as on diaries on life during Victorian times. As pupils progress through Year 5 and Year 6, many write more effectively across a wide range of genres. For example, they create fact files on the life and achievements of Samuel Morse and evaluate the effectiveness of Neville Chamberlain's war time speeches. Many pupils edit their work suitably and use more advanced vocabulary beneficially to improve their satisfactory final drafts. As a result, their independent, extended writing skills and their ability to improve their own work are developing appropriately.

When speaking Welsh, most of the youngest pupils develop basic vocabulary and phrases and respond to commands and greetings appropriately. In Year 3 and Year 4, most pupils use simple phrases occasionally, such as expressing their feelings. However, there are not enough practical opportunities for pupils to practise and use their Welsh speaking skills in class and around the school. Progress for most pupils slows as they get older and by Year 6 pupils demonstrate a limited recall of simple sentence structures and relevant vocabulary. As a result, their Welsh oracy skills are underdeveloped.

From Year 3 to Year 6, many pupils use mathematical principles well and demonstrate sound mathematical skills. They use numbers confidently, collect information and record their results in tables and graphs. For instance, they analyse line graphs securely to determine how far individuals walk. Older pupils develop effective strategies to determine the perimeters and areas of different shapes and to match fractions, decimals and percentages accurately. They use data appropriately and present it effectively in various forms. For example, many pupils use negative numbers well to work out the rise and fall of temperatures and plot parallelograms and trapezia using co-ordinates in four quadrants. However, across the school, most pupils do not apply and develop their numeracy skills well enough in real-life situations.

Most pupils have good digital skills, which they use across the curriculum successfully. For example, most younger pupils use emails effectively to express their opinions sensibly on wearing school uniforms. Most older pupils manipulate text effectively, such as organising information accurately whilst preparing presentations on Welsh inventors. Many pupils create and use simple databases and spreadsheets appropriately.

Most pupils develop their artistic and creative skills well. The youngest pupils express themselves creatively in a wide variety of contexts. For example, they create their own traditional Welsh folk dances and perform them together. Older pupils paint competently in the same style as famous Welsh and international artists and evaluate their work effectively. Additionally, nearly all pupils in the LRB embrace the freedom to experiment and develop their creativity, such as collaborating to create poems in the woodland area.

Across the school, most pupils develop their thinking skills well. They use effective strategies to resolve tasks and they persevere diligently when problem-solving. They state coherently that finding challenging tasks difficult is beneficial to their learning.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are proud members of the school, and they feel safe within its inclusive environment. They relish the opportunities to develop relationships with friends and staff, and many pupils are effective representatives of the school. They take great pride in discussing their work and the ethos of the school with each other and visitors.

In classes, in the LRB and around the school, nearly all pupils are very polite and respectful towards each other, staff, and visitors. A positive feature is the friendly ethos that permeates throughout the learning environment. Nearly all pupils are happy when they arrive at school and they talk enthusiastically about their learning. Their behaviour, both in lessons and during playtimes, is a strength of the school.

Most pupils understand how to stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, drinking water, and having an active lifestyle. For example, in the younger classes, most pupils identify healthy foods accurately whilst researching different topics. Many pupils enjoy extra-curricular activities at the school, which include a range of sports-based opportunities, artistic and life skills clubs, such as a cookery session for older pupils.

Most pupils appreciate the importance of regular exercise and the pupils in the LRB embrace the beneficial opportunities to play and explore in the woodland area. Most pupils, across the school, enjoy their regular physical education lessons and their physical skills are developing well. Older pupils explain how emotional health strategies, such as using their 'learning powers', are extremely important to ensure a balanced lifestyle. Year 6 pupils describe eloquently their contributions in developing the library as an additional quiet area, stating that it is a peaceful space to relax and enjoy a stress-free break.

Most pupils feel safe at school, and they have a sound awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe online. For example, they know that they must not disclose their passwords to others. Nearly all pupils explain sensibly that they have high levels of trust for staff and that they are content to discuss any concerns with them. Additionally, they are confident that the staff will listen to them and take account of their concerns.

Most pupils understand the importance of maintaining positive attitudes to their work and they persevere and demonstrate resilience when completing tasks. They work with their peers well to solve problems before seeking support from adults, and they use different support strategies purposefully during lessons.

Most pupils settle quickly in lessons and are developing well as capable and aspirational learners. Most contribute their ideas to the planning of topics and teachers follow these up when planning learning experiences. As a result, they engage well in their learning and remain focused for extended periods of time. Most pupils show pride in their work and react positively to feedback from their peers and adults. However, their use of oral and written feedback to make improvements in their work is inconsistent.

Nearly all pupils understand clearly that their pupil voice groups link to the school's bespoke curriculum and that they have a responsibility to ensure that their voices are

heard by others. They show a firm understanding of their responsibilities and play an important part in making decisions, which have a significant effect on the school's daily life. For example, pupils contribute well to creating reading areas in every classroom.

Most pupils are well informed about worldwide issues. Many older pupils speak and debate about their rights as children confidently. They are caring towards each other and work and play together harmoniously. They have a buddy system for playtimes, and this helps them to support their friends who are feeling lonely.

Nearly all pupils respect the environment and understand how their decisions and choices affect it. For example, most pupils agree on the need to keep the local sand dunes free of litter and that world food hunger is detrimental to many nations. Additionally, they demonstrate enthusiasm and excitement when outlining their plans to develop and maintain an area within the school grounds to grow vegetables, following a whole-school focus on conservation issues.

Most pupils show empathy towards others and are keen to support those who are in need. The school contributes to several national and local charities throughout the year, including the local food and clothing banks.

Teaching and learning experiences

Through effective teaching, teachers and support staff develop positive working relationships with pupils and create a supportive and inclusive learning environment. They encourage respect among pupils and each other and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. This contributes positively to the calm and caring ethos of the school.

Staff know the local community and the needs of its children very well and adapt their teaching to develop pupils' learning purposefully. Even though there are a few inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of pupils' outcomes, on the whole, teaching is effective. Where it is most successful, teachers challenge pupils to produce their best work in lessons within a purposeful working environment. Staff ensure that pupils feel listened to and can ask questions if they need help with their learning. Teaching assistants work alongside teachers skilfully and contribute effectively to planning and to pupils' learning and well-being.

The school's provision for personal and social education encourages pupils' understanding of their own well-being effectively. Staff use a wide range of teaching initiatives and strategies very well to support the emotional and physical health of pupils. These have been particularly effective in supporting pupils to improve their attendance after the pandemic. They have helped pupils to manage their anxieties and emotions well, by giving them the appropriate vocabulary and strategies with which to express their feelings sensibly.

The school implements a curriculum that is broad and balanced and reflects the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales successfully. This includes planned theme weeks and celebratory events that engage pupils' interests purposefully. For example, teachers facilitate well-being and internet safety weeks to re-enforce the school's values. They also plan 'World of Work' visitor days to raise pupils'

aspirations, such as when paramedics talk to pupils about their roles and experiences. Teachers in the LRB plan effective authentic learning experiences that match the school's themes well. This effective practice targets pupils' learning successfully.

Provision to develop pupils' listening, speaking and reading skills is successful across the school. Teachers ensure suitable arrangements to develop pupils' writing skills. However, opportunities for pupils to write at length independently are a developing feature of the provision. The development of pupils' Welsh language skills is underdeveloped. Most staff use basic Welsh vocabulary and phrases appropriately in the classroom, for example to give instructions to their pupils. However, teachers do not make the most of opportunities to model the language or encourage pupils to speak, ask and answer questions in Welsh well enough.

Provision to develop pupils' mathematics is effective. However, the provision for most pupils to apply and develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum is inconsistent. As a result, this limits the progress that most pupils make in developing and using their skills. The planning of opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills is good. For instance, teachers plan useful activities where pupils use coding effectively to program robots. In addition, pupils create bulletins for television programmes on local matters, such as studying the habitats of birds.

The school collaborates closely with colleagues in schools in the cluster, including the feeder high school, to ensure consistency of approach in planning the curriculum and to share good practice, as well as maximising training opportunities. As a result of this positive collaboration between staff, pupils become ambitious and innovative learners, such as through the older pupils' work on designing moon buggies.

Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback and suggest improvements to their work. However, the quality of teachers' feedback is variable, and it does not always support pupils well enough to improve their work and develop their skills independently. For example, where it is less effective, teachers repeat the same feedback often, without the intended impact on the pupils' next pieces of work.

The school uses a detailed approach to tracking pupil progress in literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers use this and other sources of information to inform their planning and to identify pupils who require targeted support well. For example, they use termly assessment information for reading skills to select individuals for specific support.

School reports to parents and carers provide suitable information about their child's progress and attitudes to learning. They contain useful targets to highlight the next steps for learning for individual pupils.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a very caring community, and the staff encourage pupils to contribute positively to its supportive and friendly ethos. The beneficial relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils, are a strong feature of the school.

Teachers and support staff understand pupils' needs effectively and they respond with sensitivity to the pupils' emotional and social needs. This supportive and warm atmosphere helps nearly all pupils settle in easily to school life and it contributes significantly to their happiness in school and their overall well-being. These diligent and thoughtful practices encourage pupils to develop resilient attitudes to their learning.

The school operates a comprehensive system to gather information on pupils' progress as they move through the school. The highly effective ALN co-ordinator works diligently with teachers to support pupils very well. Together, they use the tracking processes effectively to monitor pupils' achievements and well-being in their classes regularly. As a result, staff have a clear understanding of individual pupils' needs, which includes pupils in the LRB. Where staff identify issues for improvement, the school provides effective support and interventions to improve pupils' learning and their personal and social development. This includes emotional support sessions from external providers and staff's use of the nurture areas, which provide relaxing and calming activities for pupils.

Staff ensure a broad and well-structured range of support programmes to improve pupils' basic skills. The pupils involved in these programmes enjoy participating in engaging activities and, as a result, most identified pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Specific sessions that focus on pupils' well-being and self-esteem are effective and enable pupils to participate in lessons successfully. This helps to support all pupils' positive attitudes to learning, improves their social skills and encourages them to share their feelings openly with one another and adults.

The care and support provided by staff in the LRB is effective. The school provides personalised learning programmes and authentic learning experiences for pupils attending the LRB, which match their needs well. These have a positive impact on their individual progress and achievements. Staff in the LRB work effectively with the staff in mainstream classes to facilitate pupils' integration into the daily life of the school, such as using the outdoor area productively.

The school works effectively with external agencies, such as speech and language therapists, to provide specialist support and guidance for staff and pupils. This collaboration successfully develops a range of skills and coping mechanisms for pupils with learning, emotional and social needs. It also supports staff to develop their professional practice to better support the specific requirements of pupils with additional needs. As a result of these arrangements, pupils receive caring and inclusive support from Year 3 to Year 6 and in the LRB.

The school provides an interesting range of visits and visitors to support the curriculum and engage pupils in their learning. This includes a visit to the nearby theme park to study how a rollercoaster operates, and the LRB visit an ice cream farm as part of their topic. In addition, studies of global atrocities, such as wars, promote pupils' understanding of the importance of values, such as tolerance, and the right to a life without persecution. These activities make a positive contribution to pupils' social skills and cultural understanding.

Teachers plan stimulating opportunities to celebrate Welsh heritage and culture. Through valuable and stimulating learning experiences, the school celebrates the culture and heritage of Wales effectively. For example, older pupils study Eryri and Yr Wyddfa and debate the benefits and disadvantages of tourism on the area. Additionally, pupils study the castles of North Wales, such as Caernarfon and Conwy and the impact of the Towyn floods on their own locality.

Teachers provide thought-provoking lessons that explore human rights and make a worthwhile contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. A strong feature of these lessons is that they encourage valuable pupil discussions, which successfully develop pupils' thinking and communication skills. These structured approaches in personal and social lessons include useful opportunities to explore issues of equality, diversity and inclusion from around the world. These include exploring different traditions from other countries and different religions.

The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to learn the importance of staying safe. The leadership team and the parent liaison officer ensure that attendance strategies are maintained, and persistent absences are monitored thoroughly. The school addresses any instances of alleged bullying robustly and promptly and staff complete detailed reports of incidents.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding, and all staff understand clearly that pupils' well-being and safety are an integral part of their daily responsibilities. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher's determination to improve the quality of provision and pupils' outcomes is a significant strength of the school. Along with the senior leadership team, their perseverance to improve opportunities for pupils is noteworthy. Their work focuses successfully on placing the school at the centre of its community. This promotes the well-being of pupils and their families purposefully. The governors and staff support this vision and endeavour to implement it effectively in their daily routines. This includes the staff in the LRB, which staff, pupils and governors embrace as an important part of the school's provision.

Leaders ensure that a caring and supportive ethos is implemented across the school. All staff engage enthusiastically with the school's motto, 'Aim to Learn, Learn to Succeed', which promotes determination and resilience successfully amongst the pupils. This has a positive effect on their attitudes to learning and their engagement with each other. As a result, leaders ensure that an inclusive and warm atmosphere exists throughout the school, which the pupils embrace willingly.

Leaders allocate roles of responsibility intelligently and they hold staff to account for the quality and impact of their work sensibly. They use the findings of rigorous performance management arrangements to improve the provision, such as improving aspects of teaching and assessment. This creates a focus on refining the quality of teaching and instilling a common understanding of professional values among staff. As a result, they ensure that many pupils make good progress from their individual starting points.

The processes used by the leadership team to evaluate the effectiveness of provision are robust and based on a wide range of first-hand evidence. Systems to improve quality include detailed scrutiny of pupils' books, monitoring teaching, judging the reliability of assessments and analysing internal and external data on pupils' progress. Leaders gather the views of other stakeholders about the school to inform their practices purposefully. For example, they consider the views of members of the local community and act on any findings promptly, such as identifying the needs of vulnerable families and signposting them to support organisations.

The school's shared leadership responsibilities ensure that leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. The links between the self-evaluation processes and improvement planning is well-established and secure. As a result, leaders prioritise their findings thoughtfully and set purposeful targets to move the school forward.

Leaders embed strong routines to promote a thorough safeguarding culture with staff. Governors ensure that pupils eat and drink healthily and encourage parents to provide nutritious food in pupils' lunch boxes. Leaders work hard to develop effective engagement opportunities with parents. This includes parents and children working together in family engagement sessions, such as the entrepreneurial café.

The leadership team ensure that staff make the best use of the learning environment and resources are shared equitably across the school. This includes utilising outdoor spaces, such as the woodland and planting areas effectively. Leaders allocate resources in the classrooms productively and use the pupil development grant wisely to support basic skills across the school. This results in most identified pupils making good progress with their learning.

Governors know the school well and their regular input creates systematic improvements throughout the school. They are supportive of the headteacher and hold her and other senior leaders to account as critical friends. The headteacher informs governors about pupils' learning regularly and advises them realistically on how to improve provision, such as creating a library and nurture areas to promote pupils' learning and well-being.

Governors develop a sound first-hand understanding of the school's activities. Alongside teachers, they undertake learning walks and discuss pupils' work to measure its quality. This promotes a valuable understanding of the school's current work. Governors monitor the budget carefully. They ensure that spending decisions, over well-planned timescales, are in line with the school's priorities for improvement, such as investments in digital hardware, outdoor equipment and reading resources.

Leaders ensure that staff have access to high quality learning opportunities to support their professional development, which link closely to school improvement priorities. Notable examples are training to develop cross-curricular planning to enhance pupils' learning and emotional coaching sessions to support pupils' well-being.

The school shares effective practices with local schools and this supports the school's capacity for improving assessment and ALN arrangements in line with curriculum reform. It provides valuable opportunities for teachers to compare and

share their effectiveness with other professionals. As a result, the culture of continuous professional learning creates beneficial learning opportunities for pupils, which focus on developing capable and enthusiastic learners.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publications Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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